

What is claimed is:

1. A multimedia information playback apparatus
2 comprising:

3 first input means for receiving multimedia
4 information including video data and audio data
5 distributed from a first distribution source;

6 second input means for receiving control
7 information distributed from a second distribution
8 source; and

9 playback means for playing back the multimedia
10 information received by said first input means on the
11 basis of the control information received by said second
12 input means.

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein
2 a storage device for storing the multimedia
3 information, and a network server for distributing the
4 control information are respectively arranged as the
5 first and second distribution sources, and
6 said playback means plays back the multimedia
7 information which is distributed from the storage device
8 and received by said first input means, on the basis of
9 the control information which is distributed from the
10 network server and received by said second input means.

3. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

2 a network server for distributing the
3 multimedia information and the control information is
4 arranged as the first and second distribution sources,
5 and

6 said playback means plays back the multimedia
7 information which is distributed from the network server
8 and received by said first input means, on the basis of
9 the control information which is distributed from the
10 network server and received by said second input means.

4. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein
2 a storage device for storing the multimedia
3 information and the control information, and a network
4 server for distributing the control information are
5 respectively arranged as the first and second
6 distribution sources,

7 said playback means has a first playback mode
8 in which said playback means plays back the multimedia
9 information which is distributed from the storage device
10 and received by said first input means, on the basis of
11 the control information which is distributed from the
12 storage device and received by said second input means,
13 and a second playback mode in which said playback means
14 plays back the multimedia information which is
15 distributed from the storage device and received by said
16 first input means, on the basis of the control
17 information which is distributed from the network server

18 and received by said second input means, and
19 said apparatus further comprises switching
20 means for switching a playback mode to either one of the
21 first and second playback modes.

5. An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein
2 said switching means comprises:
3 authentication means for authenticating the
4 network server upon reception of a switching request
5 signal from a user; and
6 means for switching the playback mode of said
7 playback means to the second playback mode when said
8 authentication means authenticates the network server as
9 an authentic network server.

6. An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein
2 said playback means comprises:
3 a first navigator unit for reading out the
4 control information in the storage device by said second
5 input means in the first playback mode, analyzing the
6 readout control information, and controlling read of the
7 multimedia information in the storage device in
8 accordance with an analysis result, and
9 a second navigator unit for controlling read
10 of the multimedia information in the storage device on
11 the basis of the control information distributed from
12 the network server in the second playback mode.

7. An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein
2 the network sever generates group management
3 information for managing a plurality of users having
4 similar personal information as one group, and generates
5 based on the group management information the control
6 information for controlling playback of the multimedia
7 information, and
8 said playback means plays back the multimedia
9 information on the basis of the generated control
10 information.

8. An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein
2 said playback means comprises determination
3 means for, when change operation of the control
4 information by a user is detected during playback of the
5 multimedia information, determining whether to receive
6 the change operation, in accordance with personal
7 information of the user, and
8 when said determination means determines that
9 the change operation of the control information is
10 receivable, said playback means plays back the
11 multimedia information on the basis of the control
12 information changed in accordance with user operation.

9. An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein
2 the network server distributes multimedia

3 information of digital broadcasting having a plurality
4 of channels, and

5 said playback means plays back multimedia
6 information of a channel corresponding to the control
7 information.

10. An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein
2 the control information contains a program for
3 checking user operation contents, and
4 when user operation is detected during
5 playback of the multimedia information, said playback
6 means executes the program, and plays back multimedia
7 information corresponding to the user operation contents.

11. A multimedia information playback method
2 comprising:

3 the first step of receiving multimedia
4 information having video data and audio data distributed
5 from a first distribution source;

6 the second step of receiving control
7 information distributed from a second distribution
8 source; and

9 the third step of playing back the multimedia
10 information received by execution of the first step on
11 the basis of the control information received by
12 execution of the second step.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein
2 a storage device for storing the multimedia
3 information, and a network server for distributing the
4 control information are respectively arranged as the
5 first and second distribution sources, and
6 the third step comprises the fourth step of
7 playing back the multimedia information which is
8 distributed from the storage device and received by
9 execution of the first step, on the basis of the control
10 information which is distributed from the network server
11 and received by execution of the second step.

13. A method according to claim 11, wherein
2 a network server for distributing the
3 multimedia information and the control information is
4 arranged as the first and second distribution sources,
5 and
6 the third step comprises the fifth step of
7 playing back the multimedia information which is
8 distributed from the network server and received by
9 execution of the first step, on the basis of the control
10 information which is distributed from the network server
11 and received by execution of the second step.

14. A method according to claim 11, wherein
2 a storage device for storing the multimedia
3 information and the control information, and a network

4 server for distributing the control information are
5 respectively arranged as the first and second
6 distribution sources,

7 the third step comprises the sixth step of
8 playing back the multimedia information which is
9 distributed from the storage device and received by
10 execution of the first step, on the basis of the control
11 information which is distributed from the storage device
12 and received by execution of the second step, and the
13 seventh step of playing back the multimedia information
14 which is distributed from the storage device and
15 received by execution of the first step, on the basis of
16 the control information which is distributed from the
17 network server and received by execution of the second
18 step, and

19 the method further comprises the eighth step
20 of executing either one of the sixth and seventh steps.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein the
2 eighth step comprises:

3 the ninth step of authenticating the network
4 server upon reception of a switching request signal from
5 a user; and

6 the 10th step of executing the seventh step
7 when the network server is authenticated as an authentic
8 network server on the basis of execution of the ninth
9 step.

16. A method according to claim 14, wherein the
2 third step comprises:

3 the 11th step of reading out the control
4 information in the storage device on the basis of
5 execution of the second step in executing the sixth step,
6 analyzing the readout control information, and
7 controlling read of the multimedia information in the
8 storage device in accordance with an analysis result;
9 and

10 the 12th step of controlling read of the
11 multimedia information in the storage device on the
12 basis of the control information distributed from the
13 network server in executing the seventh step.

17. A method according to claim 13, wherein
2 the network sever comprises the 13th step of
3 generating group management information for managing a
4 plurality of users having similar personal information
5 as one group, and generating based on the group
6 management information the control information for
7 controlling playback of the multimedia information, and
8 the third step comprises the 14th step of
9 playing back the multimedia information on the basis of
10 the control information generated by execution of the
11 13th step.

18. A method according to claim 13, wherein the
2 third step comprises:

3 the 15th step of, when change operation of the
4 control information by a user is detected during
5 playback of the multimedia information, determining
6 whether to receive the change operation, in accordance
7 with personal information of the user; and

8 the 16th step of, when the change operation of
9 the control information is determined to be receivable
10 by execution of the 15th step, playing back the
11 multimedia information on the basis of the control
12 information changed in accordance with user operation.

19. A method according to claim 13, wherein
2 the network server comprises the 17th step of
3 distributing multimedia information of digital
4 broadcasting having a plurality of channels, and
5 the third step comprises the 18th step of
6 playing back multimedia information of a channel
7 corresponding to the control information.

20. A method according to claim 13, wherein
2 the control information includes a program for
3 checking user operation contents, and
4 the third step comprises the 19th step of,
5 when user operation is detected during playback of the
6 multimedia information, executing the program, and

7 playing back multimedia information corresponding to the
8 user operation contents.